

Public Consensus Process: Based Upon A “Bottom-Up” Approach

Advisory Committee

The Antelope Valley Advisory Committee was formed in June, 1996 and has met 51 times over the four year period. Coleen Seng, Jan Gauger and Keith Parker, as Tri-Chairs, have guided the Committee's work. The Advisory Committee's initial task was to identify and define the Purposes and Needs of the Antelope Valley Study and sponsored the first Town Hall Meeting (September, 1996). Following these steps, the Advisory Committee helped develop, screen and refine options to solve the Study's Purposes and Needs. They also reviewed staff generated

and special interests. Throughout the process, the Advisory Committee also has sponsored meetings with the potentially impacted residences and business owners and tenants to give them the opportunity to be fully advised and help revise the proposed plans.

Design Charettes

Many of the key design features of the waterway, roadway and abutting proposed land uses were developed with the community in two public design charettes lead by University of Nebraska Architecture Professor, Tom Laging. These visual concepts have



Design charette concept of proposed Antelope Creek and Trago Park art wall.

materials as draft documents and findings became available, guided the evolution and development of the Draft Single Package at the second Town Hall Meeting (November 1997) and later refined the Amended Draft Single Package.

The Advisory Committee is a unique mix of dedicated and interested neighborhood citizens, nonprofit organizations, businesses and government officials. The Advisory Committee initially consisted of approximately 20 members and has gradually increased to over 60 members as interest in the Study has grown. The three Partners are truly appreciative of the amount of time and commitment these citizens have made to help lead the planning process.

Work Plan Review Committee

Even before the Advisory Committee was formed, a working committee first outlined the public involvement process for use by the three Partners. Known as the Work Plan Review Committee, this committee also developed “fair play rules” that have been used throughout the process to help provide citizen inclusiveness, fairness, and consensus decision-making.

Workshops & Many, Many Meetings

At key times, the Advisory Committee sponsored workshops and formed working subcommittees on a variety of topics and issues: health and human services, trails and open space, youth recreation, and housing. The eleven key neighborhoods held special workshops to refine neighborhood issues and develop the “closer to home” strategies that are now part of the Phase 1 Projects.

Over the four-year period, over 1,000 meetings have been held to receive public input from neighborhood organizations, city wide business groups, fraternal organizations

helped shape the exciting potential of the community revitalization programs and have been incorporated into the preliminary functional design plans of the Phase 1 Projects.

Newsletters, Video, Radio Interviews

Six newsletters have been published during the Antelope Valley Study and mailed to a general mailing list of over 3,000 citizens, including residents, property owners, businesses, and community leaders. There have been press releases at key study milestones to keep the public advised and informed. Videos have been produced and broadcast on local access cable networks to further disseminate information. Over 20 briefings with the media have been held, including radio interview and hosted call in shows.

Governmental Review

Approximately, thirty-five special briefings have been held with elected officials. Super Commons meetings of the Mayor, City Council, County Board, and Planning Commission have been held at key study milestones. In turn, the key Study phases have been adopted and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by the elected officials.

Several public hearings related to the Antelope Valley Study have been conducted. These include hearings in front of the Lincoln City Council, Lancaster County Board and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission. Most recently, these bodies held public hearings and approved an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to include the Amended Draft Single Package.

Upcoming Public Input Opportunities

Public input and review is not over. Preliminary plans and agreements have been outlined by the three Partners and Antelope

Valley 60-plus community member Advisory Committee on many aspects of the proposed Phase I Projects. Still, many, many more public participation steps have to be completed before the Antelope Valley vision can become a reality and construction begins.

Now that the federal government has released the Draft Environmental Impact Study and the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Assessment, public comments and testimony are being sought until August 15, 2000 (45-day comment period). As part of the federal document review process, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the Assessment of Effects and Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Assessment will be linked and available on the City of Lincoln's web page (www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/pworks/index.htm). A new series of Channel 5 public access television shows will be airing in the month of July. Public open houses will be held 7-8:30 PM on July 24th 25th, 26th and 27th. On Saturday, July 29th, from 9-11 AM, the public can experience and tour the area involving the Phase 1 Projects. Guided bus tours will leave Lincoln High School north parking lot every 30 minutes.

These activities will lead to a third Town Hall meeting on August 1st and 2nd, at Lincoln High School, from 4:00 PM to 9:00 PM. This Town Hall will provide additional public information, discussions and formal public hearings to receive public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Assessment. The Advisory Committee and the Joiny Antelope Valley Authority (JAVA) will sponsor the third Town Hall Meeting. The key components of the Antelope Valley Study and the Phase 1 Projects will be displayed and explained by Advisory Committee, Management Committee and Study Team members. In addition, on the same dates and time, the public can give comments and testimony in front of hearing officers regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the Assessment of Effects, and the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Assessment.

The formal Phase 1 Project approval is expected to begin in early Fall. Project funding and implementation strategies will be subject to the approval of the Lincoln City Council, University of Nebraska Board of Regents and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board, as well as a variety of other federal, state and local agencies and entities. The major governmental approvals include the following: (i) Antelope Valley reflected in Comprehensive Plan Amendment; (ii) Environmental Impact Statement (iii) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Antelope Creek Feasibility Study; (iv) Phase 1 Projects funding and (v) approval of the Implementation Period of the JAVA Interlocal Agreement by the Partners. The optimistic timetable for the completion of this first set of governmental approvals is December, 2000.

Purposes and Needs...

At the first Antelope Valley Town Hall Meeting in September 1996, approximately 200 interested citizens established the top eight major Purposes and Needs of the Antelope Valley Study. These eight were again discussed and reaffirmed at Town Hall 2 after the start of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process:

1 Neighborhood Vitality: The health and spirit of neighborhoods depends, in part, on availability of good housing, jobs, education, shopping, transportation, personal safety, and medical services.

2 Stormwater Management: A 100-year flood event (a 1% chance of occurring annually) in Antelope Creek could cause extensive property, building, contents and infrastructure damages. Local floodplain management regulations stop many development opportunities or cause additional costs.

3 Downtown Area Vitality: Downtown businesses need a competitive reason not to leave the downtown area for new development areas at the City's edges.

4 Traffic Operations: Continued traffic growth is expected in Lincoln, increasing traveler delays and increasing the potential for safety conflicts. In addition, missing connections in the street system and lack of alternatives cause “through” drivers to use neighborhood streets.

5 Land Use Patterns: Different neighborhoods and land uses have sometimes grown in unplanned ways, potentially causing some land to be underutilized and other uses of land to be in direct conflict with one another.

6 Trail Continuity: Actively used bicycle and hiking trails approach Downtown but are not connected to form a coordinated trail network.

7 Recreation: Recreation facilities, parks and open space in the older city neighborhoods are in short supply for all ages, but particularly for youth.

8 Health and Human Services: Good health is directly related to access to good food, housing, transportation, and a clean and healthy environment as well as to affordable and accessible health care and human service facilities.

Neighborhood Leaders Thoughts On Antelope Valley

From the very beginning the Antelope Valley Study has been billed as Lincoln's most ambitious public works and redevelopment plan ever. Planners talk of a raised main inter-section near the Devaney Center; a green, landscaped, flood-controlling waterway where there wasn't any green before, much less creek water. A parallel bike trail would bustle with hikers and bikers. The three Partners have spent the last decade studying the details, making changes, and re-studying during meeting after meeting after meeting. Now, as the Antelope Valley Study is closer to becoming a reality, a few of Lincoln's neighborhood leaders are beginning to realize that this most ambitious plan has become Lincoln's best-ever mechanism for community revitalization.

Just the prospect of uncovering Antelope Creek for a mile north of "N" Street, where it now flows through an underground conduit, and making it an urban greenway has the demand for housing exceeding the supply in adjacent neighborhoods like Malone and Clinton. Some of the demand comes from another adjacent neighborhood, the University of Nebraska. Jim Cook of the University Place Community Organization said, "There are a lot of University employees who'd like to live closer to work." He said Antelope Valley would allow the city's central neighborhoods to move away from being a buffer zone of rental property between downtown and neighborhoods where the owners occupy a higher percentage of homes.

Cook, Neighborhoods, Inc. Executive Director Terry Uland, former Malone Neighborhood Association President, Mike Morosin and Clinton neighborhood resident Delores Lintel, however, all agree the most welcome change to result from the Antelope Valley Study process, so far, is the attitude of the people who already live in those neighborhoods. "Fighting together for or against various components in the Antelope Valley Study," said Morosin, "has made the neighborhoods stronger. Most students or others who rent housing never seemed to participate in any kind of neighborhood fellowship." He

said, "Now it's common to see them in the park enjoying themselves. They feel safe."

The transformation and generally positive public attitude toward the Antelope Valley Study is even more remarkable given the fact the transformation is probably rooted in something called the Northeast Radial project. "We just woke up one morning (in the 1980s)," said Lintel, "and learned the City had been buying up land in our neighborhoods for this roadway. I thought 'How dare they?' The ensuing fracas made the recent ballpark controversy look like a seventh-inning stretch and when the dust cleared the Northeast Radial had been thrown out of the ballgame. Lintel, by all accounts, was the opposition's most valuable player.

When a map of the Northeast Radial plan is put beside a map of the Antelope Valley plan it takes several glances to notice any difference, but Lintel said the biggest difference is the Antelope Valley planners have taken, "an absolute opposite approach from the Northeast Radial." Planners have tried hard to use community input. As a result, proposed new roads in the Antelope Valley plan follow the perimeters of neighborhoods instead of bisecting them like the old plan. "Antelope Valley," according to Lintel, "encourages reinvestment and owner occupancy of housing in the neighborhoods. The process has allowed us to speak-up for stable zoning and density." Perhaps because of the foiled Northeast Radial project, planners have listened.

In its 15 years, Neighborhoods, Inc. has developed into an agency that offers second mortgages, loans to first-time homebuyers and financial rehabilitation training in six of Lincoln's older neighborhoods. Uland likes the timing of Antelope Valley. He said a lot of people see Lincoln, "as being a large small town about to become a large city," and revitalizing neighborhoods now will be a lot more economical than several years from now. Uland also likes the flood control aspects of the Study. The uncovered channel would completely contain a 100-year rainfall event, meaning no repeat of the disastrous flooding



Neighborhood leaders say the Antelope Valley Study has already made a positive impact. From the left: Jim Cook, University Place Community Organization; Delores Lintel, Clinton neighborhood resident; Terry Uland, Neighborhoods, Inc. and former Malone Neighborhood Association President Mike Morosin

of the 1950s and easier flood insurance terms. "Right now," said Uland, "when someone buys a home in those neighborhoods the mandatory purchase of flood insurance sacrifices five-to-six-thousand dollars in buying power." He sees the open channel as creating a hard line eastern boundary for the University. "I think the University will eventually divest its (main campus) assets east of the creek, allowing a more normal development of neighborhoods."

Proposed new roads in the project would be a benefit to the entire city, but there's another reason, said Cook, the city as a whole should support Antelope Valley. "Lincoln is one city. It has no suburbs and I think that's its biggest saving building block." Cook, who grew-up in Lincoln, then returned here in 1990 after a hiatus said, "reinvigoration of the core communities would bring a balance of growth between north and south," helping Lincoln to keep a sense of oneness throughout. "If we don't spend money on revitalization now, we'll lose that sense of one community." Morosin agreed, saying, "Many of the big city neighborhoods that became famous for their blight in the 1960s, such as the Watts

neighborhood in Los Angeles, are still in a similar condition today."

There is still apprehension about life along Antelope Creek for some. One of the first orders of business should Antelope Valley graduate from a study to an actual project will be the buying-out of owners whose land falls in the path of the channel. Morosin has been an active member of the Advisory Committee and a vocal critic of certain aspects of the Antelope Valley Study. He hopes to be one of the homeowners to take advantage of the Study's proposed program to have the city move viable houses in the path of the proposed waterway or roadway to other locations. "I like the character of my old house." He is anxious to find out what kind of deal the City will offer. "It's time for the City to sit down and lay the cards on the table, and, hopefully, the result will allow people to finally relax." The Antelope Valley Project would bring closure to an unsettled period for core neighborhoods. There's even a plan to have University students re-design porches for many neighborhood houses. Porches and neighborhood relaxation, a true partnership worth building.

Historic Value of Antelope Valley

by Ed Zimmer, Historic Preservation Planner, Lincoln Planning Department

To a Lincoln historian, the Antelope Valley Study area offers rich and varied treasures, and subtle lessons. Let's take a "talking tour," and look for both.

On 19th century views of Lincoln, the Antelope Creek valley was the east boundary of the urban area. Some of the earliest buildings surviving in the valley reflect urban forms on the "west bank," and suburban houses east of the creek. For example, the pair of Victorian cottages at 2005 and 2011 "L" Street, built around 1890, are small, close-spaced "city" houses. The Murphy-Sheldon House at 2525 "N" Street, Royer-Williams House at 407 N. 27th Street, and Eddy-Taylor House at 435 N. 25th Street are larger houses on larger lots—more "suburban," if one imagines their original settings.

The study area includes a number of historic churches, and they in turn tell stories of early and modern Lincoln. Tifereth Israel Synagogue at 18th and "M" was built in 1912 to house one of Lincoln's two Jewish congregations. Later the compact Neo-classical building was the Community Playhouse

and then a factory for church organs. Now the adaptable building is home to 11 apartments. At 26th and "P" Streets the former Second Presbyterian Church of 1902 reflects Lincoln's evolving demographics, as the church of Lincoln's Vietnamese Catholics. The handsome church was designed by the Lincoln architects A. W. Woods and Artemas Roberts, who designed William Jennings Bryan's Fairview mansion that same year. The old Vine Congregational Church of 1908 at 25th and "S" Streets was later home to a Mennonite congregation, and since 1970 has sheltered Christ Temple Mission, a multi-racial congregation founded by Rev. Trago McWilliams.

The McWilliams family is emblematic of the lessons Lincoln can learn through the Antelope Valley Study. Now in its seventh generation in Lincoln, this strong African-American family has given our city teachers and churchmen, civil rights leaders and entrepreneurs, since the 1880s. Trago Park at the heart of the Antelope Valley projects bears the name of Trago T. and Trago O. McWilliams, father and son ministers.

Through much of the 20th century, Lincoln's African American citizens were increasingly segregated into the neighborhood now called "Malone," and a vibrant urban village grew up there, materially poor but rich in mutual support. This chapter of Lincoln's history is uniquely chronicled by the work of Earl McWilliams, a gifted photographer who recorded the city's buildings, workers, and black community between about 1910 and 1925. Several hundred of his artistic photographs survive, and present-day members of the McWilliams family are working with the Nebraska State Historical Society, the Lincoln Planning Department, and Antelope Valley Study Team to develop appropriate projects to share these beautiful and evocative images and the history they represent with Lincoln and the nation.

The historic treasures of the Antelope Valley range from sturdy buildings to fragile glass negatives. All of them can help us understand where our community began, and can enrich our future if we listen to their lessons.